

(The views expressed below are those of Rick Shriver, and do not necessarily represent the views of the Board of Morgan County Commissioners, the Community Improvement Corporation, or any other group or organization to which I belong.)

We have a crisis in Morgan County. That crisis is out-of-control litter along our highways and roads. That crisis is illegal dumpsites. That crisis is used tires, trash, and abandoned vehicles and appliances blighting our countryside.

Since the Morgan County Commissioners began meeting in the townships of the county, these issues have been raised at every single meeting.

I don't recall a sole week that has gone by without at least one concerned taxpayer calling or visiting the Commissioners' office to talk about the trash that is consuming this county.

We must clean up Morgan County. When I say "we," I mean every one of us. Clean up is not just the responsibility of the county government – it is everyone's responsibility.

All of our best efforts aimed at economic development, and our efforts at promoting tourism are being frustrated by the blight of trash.

Prospective employers see this affliction as a lack of pride in our county. "If you have no pride in your home, you will take no pride in your job." We know that employers have visited our county, and turned away because of trash.

Who will want to visit a county scarred by debris? Do we really want to be seen as a dirty uncivilized place?

Trash is unhealthy and unsafe. Abandoned tires, appliances and vehicles provide breeding grounds for vermin and mosquitoes, and they can be dangerous to our more welcome wildlife. They pollute the earth and ground water with dangerous metals and chemicals that enter our ecosystem with dire consequences.

These things will not disappear. Some of them will never biodegrade. They will persist in our landscape, creating even greater problems for our children and grandchildren. Plastic bottles, rubber tires, steel car bodies and aluminum cans will outlast us all.

If pride in your county won't stop you from tossing a can, bottle or bag out the car window, maybe a fine will. Littering is against the law. The minimum fine is \$500. The penalty goes up dramatically and can even include jail time if the litter pollutes a waterway.

Properly disposing of trash and discarded items is not always easy or cheap. Refuse haulers are hampered by the rising cost of the fuel and increased tipping fees at the landfills. Some parts of the county hardly have regular trash pick-up. Last year the county organized a series of "Litter Summits" to begin working with the townships and haulers to address those issues.

Here are some other positive steps we are taking: County recycling events are scheduled throughout the summer, and will be announced in the Morgan County Herald.

The Ohio Department of Transportation sponsors the "Adopt-a-Highway" program encouraging groups to adopt segments of state highways for clean up. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources sponsors a similar program for county and township roads, called "Adopt-a-Roadway."

On May 20, the Morgan County Commissioners' office is sponsoring "Pride in Morgan County Day." Dumpsters will be located in four locations for the disposal of trash picked up from roadsides, stream banks, and other public property. Please watch the Morgan County Herald for more information about this event and for the trash drop-off locations.

And once we get the county cleaned up, we must stop the cycle of littering and pollution that has brought us to this point.

While these opinions are only mine, they have been shaped by my work in the Commissioners' office, with the other organizations and agencies with which I am associated, and by the taxpayers with whom I have talked. Thus I am signing this as,



Rick Shriver
President of the Board of Morgan County Commissioners
President of the Morgan County Community Improvement Corporation